

JANUARY 16, 1985

Research on the jet lag diet has had to be delayed by a new problem. I am still in Paris at this writing, trying to do my part in finding a cure for travel sickness. But I've been thrown off course.

The change happened at breakfast after I'd had four big cup of black French coffee without any milk for a chaser. Official standards show that France is seven hours ahead of the time zone that the Shortgrass Country is in. Once the caffeine from those four cups of coffee hit my nervous system. I'd have been willing to give the long end of a six to five proposition that I'd added another seven hours to the time spread.

An old horse trainer's trick saved me from serious harm. Back in other days when the Boss kept us over stocked in hot blooded, high strung polo ponies, he had a horse tuner who was a master at backing a Thoroughbred bronc around a pen until his mainspring had relaxed.

I don't know over 12 words in French. so I wasn't able to make my waiter understand that I needed to be backed up and down the lobby to settle my nerves down. But I was able to make the doorman understand my sign language by using a 100-franc note as a prompting card that I needed him to give me a reverse ride in his revolving door. After about 60 counter clockwise laps. I was back down on my front feet and had stopped slinging my head and was ready to walk in the regular lanes of traffic.

Once I got outside. I learned that the hotel is in a good neighborhood. The President of France lives two blocks up the street. With all those wild-eyed terrorists throwing bombs in all direction, he's a good neighbor to have, because for four blocks square he has alert young guard posted, carrying short barreled carbines and long handled billy clubs.

In the bare light of dawn, these soldiers change guard. In the stillness of the untracked snow and morning haze. the sounds are like those of the wagon masters harnessing their work horses. As the young men and women leap from the vans, they slap their dark leather gloves together in the sharp cold and sling on their lanyards and heavy gun belts in a rustle of stiff leather rubbing against their sharply pressed blue uniforms. Military boots scratch on the snow pack and their youthful innocence is changed to a stern and rigid mask.

All day they man the guard houses and open tall grilled gates for the limousines filled with dignitaries. Travel advisories don't mention the guards: nevertheless, it's my best judgment to give them plenty of slack, being careful not to do anything sudden that might startle them.

While I am at it. I am going to go on and make the sacrifice and take a train trip down to the Mediterranean coast to be sure that rail travel doesn't contribute to jet lag. The hotel doorman must have observed my fascination with the soldiers. He stands at attention and salutes when I pass by. I guess he thinks I'll be back in the morning to buy another ride on his revolving door.